LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY

continuing

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under the Editorship of ROBERT HERRING

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EDITORIAL

1943

IT IS USUALLY lack of space which causes an issue to appear with a truncated Editorial. This month, however, I have a more agreeable excuse; lack of time. Not often may an editor permit himself a remark which might seem to indicate, and in wartime especially, an improperly carefree attitude to one of his functions. But I do so with the more pleasure because the exercise of another enables me to announce that planning will shortly result in two special numbers from the New World. Early in the New Year, an Antipodean number will give readers the opportunity of judging something of the literature, and learning of the culture of, Australia and New Zealand, and this will be followed by a Colombian number, for which translations are already being prepared. Further, as a change from Welsh writing, next month's number will be contributed by Scottish authors, of whom particulars will be found on the outside back cover.

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LECTURE ON POETRY SINCE 1920

By EDITH SITWELL

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I have come here to speak to you of Poetry since the year 1920; but in order to do so with any efficiency, I must first go back a short way.

At the beginning of the 1914–1918 war, we had arrived at one of those crises in the history of Poetry which, in the past, occurred every hundred years or so, but which seem now to occur with more rapidity, for I see signs that we are on the brink of another. A notable crisis of this sort followed, though not immediately, the death of Pope, owing to the nervelessness and debility of his imitators. I do not need to tell you this, but it is as well to be reminded of the fact.

In each era of poetry, outward structure must inevitably undergo a change. In the Augustan age, the outward structure of poetry was the result of logic alone, while variations in speed, the feeling of heat and cold, the variations of the differing heights and depths were produced by means of texture and were the result of sensibility and of instinct in this matter. Poetry was therefore in that age, as far as outward structure was concerned, the sister of architecture. With the Romantics, and their more poignant vowel-sense, resulting in a different kind of melodic line, poetry became the sister of music. Now she appears like the sister of horticulture, each poem growing according to the laws of its own nature, but in a line which is more often the irregular though entirely natural shape of a tree—bearing leaves, bearing flowers, bearing fruit, than a sharp melodic line, springing like a fountain.

By the end of the 1914–1918 war, Yeats, a great poet, but one who has not, I am thankful to say, been much imitated —(since imitations are usually unfortunate), was at the

height of his powers. But those persons who, while knowing nothing about the technical side of poetry, caring nothing about poetry, yet give their opinions so copiously on the subject, had not so far decided to allow he was a great poet. He was not abused, but neither was he recognized. Mr. Walter de la Mare, the late William Davies, Messrs. Gordon Bottomley, Ralph Hodgson, Edmund Blunden, all exquisite poets, were writing. Mr. Masefield had produced *The Everlasting Mercy* with its wonderful, moving climax. Mr. Sturge Moore was writing beautiful and evocative lyrics. Among the Imagistes, H.D., of whose free verse I shall speak, was producing lovely work.

These poets stood out among the weak, numb, boring nerveless verse of the time—verse which was completely senseless. And by senseless, I mean that the verse existed in a world shut away from the senses—" The Rivers of Life," as Blake called them.

Excepting in these poets whom I have named, the actual sound of verse was flaccid. " Harmony itself," said Wagner, " is a thing of thought." In other words, there must be no division between the thought and the clothing flesh, the harmony. This was forgotten. The very language was becoming flabby. It no longer had the " ultimate quality " such as Whitman's language, for instance, possessed. (The phrase is William Rossetti's.)

Then came the change.

This did not, could not, affect the real poets, those of whom I have spoken. But by their side arose poets with a new direction.

For the most part the verse of the time had lost its pulse : it either had no shape, or a shape that was artificial and did not arise from the necessities of the subject.

This was partly the result of woolly imitations of Wordsworth, whose particular simplicity, when imitated badly, could lead to flaccidity, and partly the result of a

misconception of the uses of free verse, and of the true meaning of rhythm.

" Rhythm " said Schopenhauer, in *The World as Will and Idea*, " is in time what symmetry is in space." " Time is primarily the form of inner sense."

I think we may say, therefore, that Rhythm is the form of inner sense when it has attained full consciousness and has become executive. It is the Executive Sense, or Soul.

Rhythm is one of the principal translators between dream and reality. Rhythm might be described as in the world of sound what light is in the visible world. It shapes and it gives new meaning.

Again, Rhythm has been described as " melody stripped of its pitch ". And especially in regard to free verse, that difficult medium, this should be remembered.

Before giving an example of free verse, I will speak of the problems of this medium for a moment. It is unnecessary to go into its history, with this audience, or to speak of its ancient origin, though we might pause for a moment to have a good laugh together at the terror of certain writers in the Press twenty-five years ago, at finding themselves faced with this dangerous innovation.

Now for the problems. To deal with these I must quote from my recently published *Notebook*. " The Impressionist School," wrote Jean Cocteau in *Le Rappel à l'Ordre* substitutes " sunshine for light and sonority for rhythm."

Now free verse does not substitute sunshine for light, but it does to a certain degree substitute sonority for rhythm.

Wagner in his book on Beethoven said of Palestrina, " Here rhythm is only perceptible through changes in the harmonic succession of chords, while apart from these it does not exist at all as a symmetrical division of time. Here the successions in time are so immediately connected with

the essential nature of harmony, which is itself connected with time and space, that the laws of time cannot aid us to understand such music. The sole succession of time in music of this description is hardly otherwise apparent than in exceedingly delicate changes of the same fundamental colour, which changes retain their connection through the most varied transitions, without ever being able to trace any direct drawing of lines." That is the end of the quotation from Wagner. Is this not applicable to some of the verse of our time, verse in which the shaping is not architectural, but is the result of the inward movement brought about by the texture, and particularly by the vowels—i.e. the exceedingly delicate changes of some fundamental colour?

Roger Fry, writing of Matisse, spoke of " an astonishing sense of linear rhythm, a rhythm which is . . . extremely elastic, that is to say it is capable of extraordinary variations from the norm, without loss of continuity . . . Imagine the rhythm rendered the least bit tight and mechanical in its regularity, and the whole system would break down."

This is also applicable to free verse. The writer in this medium must beware. Whitman, in his Notebooks, described himself as " apparently lawless " ; but on closer examination a certain regularity appears, like the recurrence of lesser and larger waves on the sea-shore (rolling without intermission and fitfully rising and falling).

Now let us examine an example of free verse. The poem is by H.D. and it has a beauty that is like the stillness of the flowering branch of which she is writing. Its beauty is a part of natural growth—it springs from the mind of the poet as the branches grown from a tree ; and yet it is not the result of blind nature, it has an exquisite control ; the pauses appear by nature, but also by art ; they come as it were, at the moments when the speaker is lifting her arms to the flower-laden branches :

PEAR TREE

Silver dust
lifted from the earth,
higher than my arms reach,
you have mounted,
O silver
higher than my arms reach
You front us with great mass;

No flower ever opened
so staunch a white leaf,
no flower ever parted silver
from such rare silver;

O white pear
your flower-tufts
thick on the branch
bring summer and ripe fruits
in their purple hearts.

"The true mistake," said Coleridge in one of his Lectures, "lies in the confounding mechanical regularity with organic form. The form is mechanic when on any given material we impress a predetermined shape, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material; as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fulness of its development is one and the same with its outward form." It is this organic shape that is produced by such free verse as that of Mr. Eliot, H.D., and Sacheverell Sitwell.

From time to time, cross old gentlemen and still crosser young ones, reproach me because I am interested in technique. What a shocking thing it is, if you come to think of it, for any workman to be interested in the materials with which he works! Will the old gentlemen, and the young gentlemen, kindly remember these words of William Blake "Mechanical excellence is the only vehicle of genius"

and " Without innate Neatness of Execution, the Sublime cannot exist ".

To add one commonplace remark inspired by ordinary common sense; It is not much use to have a soul unless one has a body to execute its movements and inspirations. And if one must have a body, it would be preferable, if possible, to have one that is beautiful.

And now, before I speak of technical experiments made by modern poets, I must speak for a while about the difference between ancient and modern aesthetics.

Mr. Sergei Eisenstein, in *The Film Sense* (translated by Jay L. Leyda; Faber and Faber. . . . An invaluable book for any one interested in aesthetics) quotes from an essay by the late Monsieur René Guilleré on " The Jazz Age " (this appeared in *Le Cahier Bleu*, No. 4, 1933). " Formerly," wrote Monsieur Guilleré, " the science of aesthetics rested content on the principle of fused elements. In music, on the continuous melodic line threaded through harmonic chords; in literature, through the fusion of a sentence's elements through conjunctions and transitions; in art, on a continuity of plastic forms and structures of combinations in these forms. Modern aesthetics is built upon the disunion of elements, heightening the contrast of each other: repetition of identical elements, which serves to strengthen the intensity of contrast.

" In the form of jazz, if we look into its musical elements and into its method of composition, we find a typical expression of this new aesthetic. Its basic parts: syncopation and a dominance of rhythm. This cancels out smoothly curving lines—curlicues, phrases in the form of a lock of curling hair, characteristic of Massenet, and all slow arabesques. Rhythm is stated by angle—protruding edge, sharp profile. It has a rigid structure—firmly constructed. It strives towards plasticity. Jazz seeks volume of sound, volume of phrase. Classical music was based on planes

(not on volumes), planes arranged in layers, planes erected atop one another, planes horizontal and vertical, creating an architecture of truly noble proportions, palaces with terraces, colonnades, flights of monumental steps—all receding into a deep perspective. In jazz all elements are brought to the foreground. This is an important law that can be found in painting, stage design, in films, and in poetry of this period. Conventional perspective with its fixed focus and its gradual vanishing point has abdicated.

"In both art and literature creation proceeds through several perspectives, simultaneously employed. The order of the day is intricate synthesis—bringing together view-points of an object from below and view-points from above.

"Antique perspective presented us with geometrical concepts of objects—as they could be seen only by an ideal eye. Our perspective shows us objects as we see them with both eyes, gropingly.

"In our new perspective, there is no perspective. Volumes are no longer created through perspective: different intensities, varying colour saturations now create the volumes. Musical volume is no longer created through receding planes, with a sound foreground and appropriate recessions. Its volume is now created by the volume of sound. There are no more great canvases painted with sound in the manner of theatre drop-cloths. Jazz is volume. It doesn't employ voices with an accompaniment, similar to figures against a background. Everything works. Each instrument performs its solo while participating in the whole. The orchestra has even lost its impressionist divisions—with all the violins, for instance, playing the same theme on harmonic notes to create greater volumes of sound.

"In jazz each man plays for himself in a general ensemble. The same law applies to art: the background itself is a volume."

Eisenstein adds: "These arts correspond to the very image of the reasoning process of those who are linked to the epoch. Isn't this picture familiar to us, with its absence of perspective, reflecting the lack of historical perspective in a large part of the world to-day, or in the image of an orchestra where each player is on his own, straining to break up this inorganic whole of many units by taking an independent course—but bound together in an ensemble only by the iron necessity of a common rhythm——"

(That common rhythm is the necessity brought about by hunger. If our voice fails for a moment, is not in the foreground, we shall drop out; there will be no food for our mouths.)

The above passage does not apply to all our problems. But if we were to produce a synthesis of the age in which we lived (I am speaking of the time immediately after the last war) it was necessary to adapt our technique, even to form a technique for these necessities.

Nor was it enough to study the proper use of speech-rhythms—speech-rhythms made dynamic, speaking "somewhat above a mortal mouth", as Ben Jonson said that poetry must do.

Unrhymed free verse was not enough. We needed a more violent medium, to be used in certain necessities. To do this, we must study the varying effects produced by texture upon rhythm and upon speed.

Histories of English prosody have occupied themselves mainly with the effect on rhythm of variety and changes of accent, and the effect of alliteration; but as far as I know, with the exception of a short, but very interesting chapter on Texture itself (in Mr. Robert Graves' *Techniques of Modern Poetry*) the effect of texture upon rhythm and upon speed have not been considered. The truth is, that the texture of a poem has been regarded merely as a matter of fatness and leanness—has been acknowledged only as

producing richness or sweetness or hardness in the poem; but the fact that texture is largely responsible for rhythm, and for variations in the speed of the poem, have not been acknowledged. The particular part played by the varying uses of consonants, vowels, labials and sibilants has been insufficiently considered.

My own technical experiments, of which there are a great many, are in the nature of inquiries into the effect on rhythm, and on speed, on the use of rhymes, assonances and dissonances, placed outwardly and inwardly in different places in the lines, in most elaborate patterns; and, too, I experimented in the effect on speed of the use of equivalent syllables, that system which produces almost more variations than any other device.

The rhythm and speed of a skilful unrhymed poem differs from the rhythm and speed of a rhymed poem containing the same number of feet—and both the rhymed and unrhymed poems differ slightly in rhythm and speed from a poem ending with assonances and dissonances, but containing the same number of feet. Again, assonances and dissonances put at places within the lines and intermingled with equally skilfully placed internal rhymes, have an immense effect upon rhythm and upon speed; and their effect on rhythm and sometimes, but not always, upon speed, is different from that of lines containing elaborately schemed internal rhymes without assonances and dissonances.

Many of the poems of this time are technical experiments of an extreme difficulty—virtuoso exercises. Some of these poems have a violent exhilaration, others have a veiled melancholy, or a sadness masked by gaiety.

" Purely arithmetical relations," wrote Schopenhauer, in *The World as Will and Idea*, " lie at the foundation of both rhythm and melody; in the one case, the relative duration of the notes, in the other case, the relative rapidity of the

vibrations in the rhythmical element is essential; for it can produce a kind of melody of itself alone, and without the other."

Now this is the case with a work such as *Façade*, where in many cases the rhythmical element has produced the melody.

Many years before, Villiers de l'Isle Adams wrote of his own work, *Tribulat Bonhommet*, that it was "an enormous and sombre clowning, the colour of the century". "Words and thoughts," said Arthur Symons of this work, "never brought together since Babel, clash into a protesting combination, and in the very aspect of the page there is something startling." This applies equally to certain works produced in 1920.

At other moments (as Jean Cocteau said of another work of more or less the same kind, the Ballet *Parade*, in which he, Picasso, and Satie were the collaborators) the work is "the poetry of childhood overtaken by a technician".

He adds: "For the majority of artists, a work cannot be beautiful without a plot, involving mysticism, love, or boredom. Beauty, gaiety, sadness without romance are suspect."

It is certain that an empty work which *appears* to be serious because it is dull and heavy and has no vitality, will be acclaimed as a masterpiece, while a work of this kind will be at first derided, and its author insulted.

The poems appeared strange, because there were in them occasional deep plunges into the subconscious soul, and because, to quote a remark of the scientist Poincaré that I found quoted the other day (I am unfortunately unable to find its context), "the accident of a rhyme calls forth a system from the shadow"—I would amend this; I would say, not only a system, but sometimes a planetary system. There are very great dangers, of course, inherent in works which explore the unconscious mind. We detach the atoms

of our world, in order to examine them. " Goethe," said that derided great writer, Emerson, " had a power to unite the detached atoms again by their own law." And again, " The Greeks said that Alexander went as far as Chaos; Goethe went, only the other day, as far; one step farther he hazarded and brought himself straight back." Not every plunge into the unconscious has this power, this certainty, this ultimate safety.

At about this time, the poets were much occupied in examining the meaning of material phenomena. We, who had just come out from the shadow of death, from the appalling first world-war, felt as if the physical world and its manifestations were a new reality. They must be examined as if we had suddenly burst into life, or had gained sight after being blinded from birth. We must examine the physical manifestations and see what they revealed to us of the spiritual world.

Seeing the immense design of the world, one image of wonder mirrored by another image of wonder, the pattern of fern and of feather by the frost on the window pane, the six rays of the snowflake mirrored in the rock-crystal's six-rayed eternity, seeing the patterns of the scaly legs of birds mirrored in the pattern of knot-grass—might we not enter into those correspondences, as Swedenborg said, whereby we may correspond with angels. Were those shapes moulded by Blindness?

" As you see," said Jean Cocteau, a writer of considerable acuity and illumination, who is underrated at present because of the silliness of some of his followers, " as you see, we are not far from the religious spirit, the primordial importance that is granted to lyricism, in minds like ours, the most capable, one would have thought, of despising it, obliges us to recognize in it a divine essence. This can change the slightest object into an idol, and make it live for us, in conditions of astounding silence."

" The spirit of poetry," he continues, " is the religious spirit outside all precise religion," adding that Claudel depicted this state perfectly when he told us that Rimbaud was a mystic in the wild state. This is true of many poets.

An American critic, Lincoln Kirkstein, wrote recently of two great painters, Seurat and Tchlitchew, that " objects indicated exist isolated in their own air. . . . Each has its own essential temporal and spatial independence ".

Among the characteristics of certain modern poetry at its best, as of modern painting at its best, is the extraordinary and almost terrifying identity of that idol, the subject—an identity which is due in part to simplicity, to the stripping away of all superfluities, and the extraordinary, almost terrifying silence by which the idol is surrounded, with, in the midst of that silence, the beat of those heightened, violently quickened pulses.

It was said that the images in many of the poems of this time, were strange. This was partly the result of intense concentration. " A condensement of the shape of actual life," said Wagner in *The Play and Dramatic Poetry*, " can be comprehended . . . only when it appears magnified, strengthened, unaccustomed." If this seemed so, it is because the senses of the poets were like those of primitive peoples—at once acute and uncovered, and they are interchangeable; where the language of one sense is insufficient to cover a meaning, a sensation, we use another, and by this means, we attempt to pierce down to the essence of the thing seen, producing or heightening the significance by discovering in it attributes which at first sight appear alien, but which are acutely related, by producing its quintessential colour (sharper, brighter, than that seen by an eye grown stale, and by stripping it of all unessential details).

A beautiful early example of this acute and piercing visual apprehension, this concentration into essence by the means of which I have been speaking, may be found in these

lovely lines from Gerard Manley Hopkins " The May Magnificat ", . . . the poem, as you will remember, is about spring :

> Ask of her, the mighty mother :
> Her reply puts this other
> Question : " What is Spring ? "
> Growth in everything—
>
> Flesh and fleece, fur and feather,
> Grass and greenworld all together.
> Star-eyed strawberry-breasted
> Throstle above her nested
>
> Cluster of bugle-blue eggs thin
> Forms and warms the life within ;
> And bird and blossom swell
> In sod or sheath or shell.

Hopkins has had, not entirely through his own fault, a terrible influence technically upon certain poets of my generation and that immediately following it ; but the poets who imitate him badly have not that piercing, truth-finding vision that produced those lovely lines.

In the sharply-seen image of the star-eyed strawberry-breasted thrush, Hopkins says strawberry-breasted because of the freckles on her breast. In the enhanced and deepened colour of the bugle-blue eggs, the sharp " U " of " bugle " melting into the softer " U " of " blue " gives the reflection of one in the other, the sisterhood of the deep blue heaven, the flower and the egg, their colours changing and shifting in the clear light.

When critics become angry with us because of our passion for the world we can see and touch, I think of those great words in one of Whitman's Notebooks : " When I see where the East is greater than the West . . . or a father is more needful than a mother to produce me, then I guess I shall see how spirit is greater than matter." And again, " The soul or spirit transcends itself into all matter—into

rocks, and can live in the life of a rock—into the sea, and can feel itself the sea—into the motions of the sun and stars."

The trouble was partly due, of course, to the over-civilization of the poetry which immediately preceded us . . . This over-civilization infected all the arts. We must not banish our animal nature. "I have found," Leonardo da Vinci wrote in his Notebooks, "that in the composition of the human body as compared with the bodies of animals, the organs of sense are duller and coarser. Thus it is composed of less ingenuous instruments, and of spaces less capacious for receiving the faculties of sense. I have seen in the Lion Tribe that the sense of smell is connected with part of the substance of the brain which comes down from the nostrils."

The greatest artist, in all the arts, including most certainly the poet, has something of the Lion in him. We must have the eyes, the nose of the Lion, the Lion's acuity of sense, and with these, the Sun of Man's reason. Remember the animal of genius of whom Baudelaire wrote: "The poetic idea," he noted, in *Fuseés*, "which disengages itself from the movement in the lines, would seem to postulate the existence of a vast being, immense, complicated but of harmonious proportion—an animal full of genius, suffering and sighing all sighs and all human ambitions." It is this that we need in poetry.

This brings us, by a natural transition, to the question of simplicity. The true simplicity is not the result of debility, as is thought by some people, but is a matter of a certain raw majesty, a heroic nakedness.

The best poetry of our time, although it is held to be of an extreme complication, has actually attained to a new kind of simplicity and compression. That so much of a varying character should be compressed into a line is startling, because it involves the fusion of exceedingly complicated cross-currents and cross-lights into an element.

It is only by attaining to this fusion that poetry becomes the voice of the world.

" The Beautiful," said Baudelaire in *L'Art Romantique*, " is invariably of a double composition, in spite of the fact that the impression it makes is single ; for the difficulty of discerning varying elements of beauty in the unity of the impression, in no way invalidates the need for variety in the composition. The Beautiful is composed of an eternal, invariable element, of a quantity difficult to determine, and of a relative, circumstantial element, which may be the epoch, the mode, ethics, or passion (either alternatively or together). Without this second element . . . the first element would be indigestible, inappreciable, not adapted or appropriate to human nature."

We must now approach the question of subject and of treatment.

I cannot say too often that genius is religion. Genius is worship. Genius is the Night of the Soul into which comes the great Light. And to genius all things are sacred.

In an apochryphal letter published originally in a Moscow paper and quoted by Eisenstein in *The Film Sense*, Picasso is supposed to have said: " There are painters who transform the sun into a yellow spot, but there are others who, with the help of their art and their intelligence, transform a yellow spot into a sun."

I ask you which is the greater and more important artist ?

And yet certain people become very angry when the yellow spot is transformed into a sun. It is deception. It is not using a great subject. Why ennoble the commonplace ? Why show our common life as if it had some purpose beyond the grave ?

" The greatest poet," said Whitman, " does not moralize or make applications of morals—he knows the soul. The soul has that measureless pride which consists in never acknowledging any lessons or deductions but its own. But

it has sympathy as measureless as its pride, and the one balances the other."

Can you tell me what lesson Shakespeare teaches. He ennobles the soul, and makes it great in stature. But lessons?

Let us consult that wise old man Goethe on the subject of lessons. "It was a great merit in old Kant," he said in one letter, "that he placed nature and art side by side, granting to either the right to act without purpose on great principles . . . Nature and Art are too great to aim at purposes . . ." And in another letter: "The Germans are always hunting after profound thoughts and ideas . . . assuming them where they are not. Do, I pray, give yourselves up to your impressions; be amused, moved, improved, taught, and emboldened to some great idea or action. But do not, by any means, fancy that is all vanity unless it has some abstract thought or idea beneath its surface.

"They ask me what idea I wished to incorporate in my Faust? Can I know it, or if I know, can I put it into words? From the heavens, through the world, into hell. There is something, but it is not an idea, it is only the programme of the progress of the dramatic action. . . .

"As a poet, I was never anxious to embody an abstract idea. Impressions came to my mind, impressions of nature, of life, lovely, many-coloured, varied impressions; they were begot of a lively fancy and all I had to do as a poet was the artistic shaping and fashioning of such impressions, and their production in such a form that my readers received the same impressions from the pages of my book.

"Whenever I sought to embody an idea, I did it in little poems in which there could be unity throughout."

That is one side of the question.

But we *must* have the central core. And all the veins of the poem, its shape must spring from, must be connected with, that central core.

"The hero is he who is immovably centred," said Emerson, and Baudelaire, quoting this, says: "This can equally be applied to the domain of poetry and art. The literary hero, that is to say the true writer, is he who is immovably centred."

In 1917 the first book by one of the greatest poets writing in the English language for the last hundred years was published. That great poet is T. S. Eliot.

I propose to speak rather of the earlier poems of this very great poet than of his latest work, because the earlier poems enter more into the scope of this lecture.

In the poems published a year or two after the first volume, there is an appalling and terrifying laughter, apt, at times, to change to that which is known where

> breastless creatures underground
> leaned backward with a lipless grin

This laughter is heard in all the poems of this period excepting in *Gerontion;* and at times it masquerades as a human amusement. In *Sweeney Erect*, however, we have the "lipless grin" alone. In the companion poem to this, *Sweeney Among the Nightingales*, amidst the spiritual and physical horror of the company, where man is part braying beast, part worm, part ape, or where man is but the worm turned vertebrate:

> Apeneck Sweeney spreads his knees
> Letting his arms hang down to laugh,
> The zebra stripes along his jaw
> Swelling to maculate giraffe
>
> . . . .
>
> The silent vertebrate in brown
> Contracts and concentrates, withdraws;
> Rachel née Rabinovitch
> Tears at the grapes with murderous paws.

—in the midst of Hell, we find this despairing beauty;

> The host with someone indistinct
> Converses at the door apart,

The nightingales are singing near
The Convent of the Sacred Heart,

And sang within the bloody wood
When Agamemnon cried aloud,
And let their liquid siftings fall
To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud.

We may remark on the inspiration and genius that in

Apeneck Sweeney spreads his knees
Letting his arms hang down to laugh

uses, in the first line, minute sharp pin-pricks of vowels, like the beginning of a pin-point of brain; and, in the next, produces a gross sagging sensuality by means of the contrasted dark heavy vowels.

In this poem, the whole spiritual state of the characters is conveyed by the actual sound of the first verse:

Apeneck Sweeney spreads his knees
Letting his arms hang down to laugh,
The zebra stripes along his jaw
Swelling to maculate giraffe

Here, after the first line, there is only hollowness, blankness, lazy abysses of emptyness, stretches of vacancy, contractions into shrunken nothingness. And, amidst this, the hoarse animal sound of the "a" in jaw. All this is conveyed by the different wave-lengths, the heights and depths of the "a's" which run through the verse.

We meet Sweeney again, after a century of material experience compressed into the mechanism of thirteen years or so, in the sequence of two poems, *Sweeney Agonistes*. But here, he and his passive complements have lost the flapping laziness which characterized *Sweeney Erect* and *Sweeney Among the Nightingales*. They seethe forward into an unknown future with a boneless movement, interweaving like worms intertwining. This movement continues throughout twenty pages, stopping only once, never hesitating otherwise excepting to change its gear

from mood to mood, and even then never raising or lowering itself; the speed, the boneless movement, merely seethes sideways or backwards.

The rhythms seem to be ordinary speech-rhythms, but the seething intertwining movements give them a world-significance which no ordinary speech-rhythms would hold.

Doris, whom we have met before, in *Sweeney Erect*, speaks with a gramophone imitation of a human voice, but her terre-à-terre friend, who bears the significant and horrible name of Dusty, has a voice which seems actually muffled by the element of which she is a native.

In the second fragment, we have the attempt of the debased rhythm of modern life to simplify itself into the sound—not arising from, but lowered from, the needs of that life—of cannibal drums.

The variety of Mr. Eliot's poems is so great, that it is impossible, in one lecture, even to begin to discuss all their aspects. But I would like to speak for a while of *The Waste Land*. I do not need to tell you of the history of the title of this great poem.

In the book from which that title was taken, Miss Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, the significance of the Waste Land is to be found in Fertility Ritual. But in Mr. Eliot's Waste Land—the Waste Land of our modern civilization—the old rhythms, uniting man with his fellow man, uniting men with women in fruitful love, uniting mankind with the earth, these are destroyed, changed, or broken down. In the modern Waste Land the ground has, indeed, been ploughed up, but into furrows so deep that they might be graves for all mankind. The seed is scattered, nor where it has taken root do the waters of the spirit come to refresh it. With the machine age, the natural rhythms of the soil and of the seasons have been broken down; no longer have we a slow maturing of time bringing our earth to harvest.

The difficulty of blending this heap of broken images, images of to-day, images left from the past civilization and cultures, was very great. Mr. Eliot, therefore, with his supreme genius for organizing a poem, has used the symbols of "The Tarot Pack" (which has, as we read in *From Ritual to Romance*, a connection with Fertility Ritual, and is therefore peculiarly suitable for the purpose) as a means whereby he may sweep the broken images into such positions, such attitudes, that the shadows cast by these will fall into a pattern which forms a comprehensive and deeply significant whole. By this means, then, he has been able to draw together figures, symbols and events which would otherwise be scattered throughout Time and Space, and has at the same time shown that these lie within the hand of an inescapable Destiny.

In the strange, muttering, half-alive whisper of the "clairvoyante", the whole scope of the poem is concentrated, made small for our inspection.

> "Here," said she,
> "Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor.
> (Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)
> Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
> The lady of situations.
> Here is the man with three staves, and here the wheel,
> And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
> Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
> Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
> The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.
> I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.

The way in which the caesuras are cast throughout this passage gives the impression that they are lengthening shadows; and, perhaps for this reason, the clairvoyante's voice seems to be that of a sleepwalker wandering among the shadows rather than that of a sibyl amidst the desert lights of day.

The miraculous organization of the poem is shown, not

only in the use of the Tarot Pack as a setting-off point, but in the way in which the themes are repeated on all the different levels of human consciousness and human experience. For instance, the beauty, the radiance, the deep and holy passion of the passage about the hyacinth girl (the hyacinth is one of the flowers associated with the sacrifice of the Slain God in *The Golden Bough*)

> You gave me hyacinths just a year ago;
> They called me the hyacinth girl.
> Yet when we came back late from the Hyacinth garden
> Your arms full and your hair wet, I could not
> Speak and my eyes failed, I was neither
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
> Looking into the heart of light, the silence;

this will soon be changed to this terrible echo :—

> My nerves are bad to-night, Yes, bad. Stay with me,
> Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
> What are you thinking of? What thinking?, What?
> I never know what you are thinking. Think!"
> I think we are in rats' alley
> Where the dead men lost their bones.
> "What is that noise."
> "The wind under the door."
> "What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"
> "Nothing again nothing"
> Do
> You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
> Nothing?
> I remember
> Those are pearls that were his eyes.
> "Are you alive, or not. Is there nothing in your head?"

In this passage, the actual hunting, haunting, haunted, despairing movement of the wind rising and falling, pausing and rushing onwards, is given not only by the phrasing, the rushing sound, the sudden sinking silence of the sentences, the rising and falling of the rhythm, but also by the repetition of a word, as in

" Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak
What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
I never know what you are thinking. Think!"

In the whole passage, the only human voice which is not part of the wind sounds in the lines

" I think we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones."

and in those two lines rhythm is dead—it is not even a broken thing dragging its weight along; even the wind has lost its movement and is scattered like those bones.

In the rest of the passage the weft left over from the " empty shuttles of the wind " is mainly composed of two threads, " do " and " nothing ". There, indeed, is to be woven the whole of the future existence of these people. And an element of this sound floats towards us, drifting still more aimlessly, with all the life gone out of the mind in *The Fire Sermon :*

" On Margate sands
I can connect
Nothing with nothing.
The broken fingernails of dirty hands.
My people, humble people, who expect
Nothing!

Let us turn now to the description of the crowd flowing over London Bridge

" There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying, ' Stetson!
You were with me in the ships at Milae!
That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
Oh keep the Dog far hence that's friend to men,
Or with his nails he'll dig it up again.
You! Hypocrite lecteur! mon semblable! mon frère! ' "

Here is Stetson, an ordinary man with an ordinary name—one of the crowd which

" . . . flowed over London Bridge . . .
I had not thought death had undone so many.

being met by one whom he knew, who cries out his name. The great cry

> " You who were with me in the ships at Milae "

recalls to both those dead-in-life the memory of adventure and of battle amidst the great waters of the spirit.

The reason for the transition from the ships at Milae to

> " That corpse you planted last year in your garden "

and the reason why these should appear in this particular part of the poem are clear. The corpse is at once the slain Vegetation God and our dead self, perished, perhaps, in those far-away ships. It is also a buried memory :

> (" You gave me hyacinths first a year ago . . . ")

and the lines

> " That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
> Has it begun to sprout ? Will it bloom this year ?
> Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed ? "

these pick up the theme of the lines with which the poem begins

> April is the cruelest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to point out the terrible travesty, perversion, complete reversal of the idea of the primeval and holy fertility ritual, at the end of *A Game of Chess*, after the lines

> When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said

In the very coarseness of the rhythm, in the meaningless raucous sound of the vowels, we are given the essence of these new savages, whose savagery is no longer represented by a superb muscular system. The human sacrifices of this new benightment have not the heart torn out. Instead, their flesh is stripped away, and we can almost see the jerking of the nerves.

In the first lines of the fifth section, " The anguish of the forty days," the anguish of those who watched by the Hooded Man, the anguish of both the unrepenting and the repenting, are fused with the barren pains of the opening lines of *The Waste Land*—

> " After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
> After the frosty silence in the gardens
> After the agony in stony places
> The shouting and the crying
> Prison and palace and reverberation
> Of thunder of spring over distant mountains

Then, after the slow sinking of the phrase

> " . . . dying
> With a little patience "

we find ourselves once again circling vainly, but this time slowly and with no life in our movements. Rhythm has sunk to a dead thing, or a thing rather which has lost its memory. The cry is always for " water ", that water which could not save, and the repetition of the word is, purposefully, the only pulse-beat which could hold the sound together. But by us, always, walks the Hooded Man, who has been the Slain God of Frazer's *The Golden Bough* in the beginning of men's minds, and who is at once the Slain God and Jesus Christ.

The splendour, the majesty, the fire and passion and control of the rest of the poem cannot be explained. The lines have a miraculous balance, floating upon the waves of passion, moving like flames. It is only possible to say of one detail, that anyone who has ever heard the thunder speaking in the mountains will know the accents that end this great poem.

The actual sounds have the reverberations of the sound of the thunder echoing over mountains—the Voice of God comes to us.

. . . .

Now, with the approach of a new war, with the increasing

misery and apprehension of mankind, *political* piety took the place of religious piety.

A new form of intolerance set in. No matter how bad and incompetent, how fireless, a verse-writer might be, if he had political piety he was accepted as a poet. This is still the case.

This piety-nuisance has always been with us, but I believe the political piety nuisance is the worst of all.

Every young man and young woman who has ever read Marx and walked in a procession, becomes automatically a poet. I think there have *never* been so many hundreds and thousands of bad poets as there are to-day; and they encourage each other recklessly.

I wish people would try to remember that no amount of moral fervour, political or otherwise, will make a man a poet if he has no genius for poetry. To hate the order of the world is not enough.

The dullness of these young men and women is something to be wondered at, but the Press, because they had ignored Yeats and Eliot, and been rude to my brothers and myself, are so terrified of making the same mistake again, that they take these works seriously.

" Gray," said Dr. Johnson, " was dull in a new way and so was held to be great." I fear that is the case with these young people.

But amidst all the welter of hopelessly bad verse, some poets with a genius for their medium, with real vision, were arising.

I can mention but a few. Of these, W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender were among the most important.

I will speak of Mr. Auden first, for he comes first in point of age. When he appeared, with *The Orators*, I believed we were witnessing the growth of a really great new poet. Then he underwent, as is his habit from time to time, a period of extreme numbness, and I believed my first

impression had been wrong, and that at his best he was but an exquisite minor poet. This was but a phase, the numbness was cast aside. Mr. Auden is at his best, a great poet and I use the word " great " advisedly. But he is a great poet who is in considerable danger from certain of his admirers who lack critical sense, and are merely anxious that he should fall in with their ideas. They urge him to a careless over-production. This should never be allowed.

Mr. Auden takes no particular interest in the world of appearances, or in vegetable nature, and yet, to me, he is of the same order of poet as Wordsworth.

His love is like Wordsworth's love. He has the same wonderful human warmth. He has not the fiery passion, the explosive force of Mr. Eliot. But his is a comforting warmth. He has a feeding goodness, like that of bread.

Writing of Wordsworth in my *Notebook*, I said: " On the levels of his life, he knew light and it was the light of reason rather than the innermost secret Flame. He brought to his poetry all ' the household stuffe of Heaven on earth '.

" Reason and Tranquillity were the companion angels of Wordsworth, as he walked through an everyday world made splendid by the light of a genius which illuminated but did not transform. Common speech and common experience were here, but all made radiant and unforgettable by inspiration. . . . He had the warmth of the earth and of the human heart, and that genius which was rather of the heart than of the soul had taken all the chill from Reason, till Reason had the pulse of a human yet a holy heart."

This, I think, is equally true of Auden. He has not yet given us an Ode on the Intimations of Immortality, but see how wonderful his mortal world can be ! And the other I am convinced, will come.

As I read the works of that wonderful young poet who is Mr. Auden's slightly younger contemporary, Mr.

Stephen Spender, I think of a phrase in a letter of Goethe's . . . " Ethics are not the result of reflection; they are beautiful nature, created and innate " . . . and another phrase . . . " The spirit of the real is the true ideal ". Mr. Spender has the spirit of the real to an extraordinary degree; but it is transmuted, as reality should be in every case.

In Mr. Spender's case, it is transmuted by a strong white radiance which is rather like that of Shelley in his more tranquil moments.

I saw the other day a reproduction of a picture by one of the greatest living painters, Tchelitchew. It was a picture called The Golden Leaf, and it was of a human body in which all the veins, all the organs seemed filled with light.

This is what Mr. Spender does to the ordinary objects of our world.

In a poem called *Exiles from their Land, History their Domicile*, occur these lines:

> Number there freedom's friends. One who
> Within the element of endless summer
> Like leaf in amber, petrified by light,
> Studied the root of action.

But these poems are not petrified by light . . . they are eternal in light, but that is a different thing. Light is action, light is the brain. They have, as Whitman said his own poems had, " purposes as health or heat on snow has." They are healthy and nourishing like bread. And they are particularly healing, for all the tragic import of such lines as these, from *In 1929*.

> Now I suppose that the once-envious dead
> Have learnt a strict philosophy of clay.
> After these centuries, to haunt us no longer
> In the churchyard or at the end of the lane
> Or howling at the edge of the city
> Beyond the last beanrows, near the new factory.

These poems, among the other noble gay heroes, are leaving the vivid air signed with their honour.

" Genius," said Emerson, that foolishly neglected writer, " is religious. It is a larger imbibing of the common heart."

I feel that larger imbibing of the common heart in these poems. And reading certain works of Mr. Spender, Mr. Auden, Mr. Day Lewis, Mr. George Barker, a wonderful young poet who has not yet quite emerged from the surrounding husk which shields all natural growth, in Mr. Dylan Thomas at his best and in certain poets subsequent to these, who do not come within the scope of this lecture, I know that we have indeed a hope for the future of poetry.

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FRESH LIGHT ON RIMBAUD

By ENID STARKIE

When the French poet, Arthur Rimbaud, at the age of nineteen, burned his manuscripts and abandoned all thought of a literary career, he spent some years wandering round Europe as a vagabond and finally drifted to the Red Sea coast in search of a fortune. He spent the last eleven years of his life in Aden or in Abyssinia as a gun-runner and trader and was even implicated in the slave trade. As far as is known hitherto he left no writings. Now an article in the Vichy edition of *Paris Soir* of 29th December, 1942, relates that when a United Nations' expedition entered the city of Dire Dáwa in Ethiopia the commanding officer was shown, in one of the rough native inns, a trunk alleged to have belonged to the "wild Frenchman". When it was opened it was found to contain—according to the report—manuscripts which he had written during his years of exile. The article, although founded on the grossest ignorance concerning the poet's life and works, gives nevertheless of the documents an account which has verisimilitude and it may well be that the report is true. The manuscripts are said to contain a series of articles which Rimbaud wrote for *Le Temps*, *Le Figaro*, and for a paper of his home town, *Le Courrier des Ardennes*. It is a fact that he did, on his return from his ill-fated expedition to King Menelek in 1887, write articles intended for these papers—his letters give proof of this—but they were never published and it has often been wondered what had become of them.

Rimbaud returned to France in 1891, taking with him a suitcase containing his personal effects and some papers. Through the kindness of M. Haim Matarasso in Paris, who owns them, I have been privileged to go through these papers and I discovered that there were amongst them no

family letters and no personal writings of any kind, only business documents. It was easy to assume that Rimbaud had destroyed his personal papers before he left Harar, but it is quite possible that, on the contrary, he may have left them in the safe keeping of an inn in Dire Dawa where they remained undisturbed for half a century, since no one came to collect them.

When he left Harar in April, 1891, Rimbaud intended to return to Abyssinia, he was only going to Aden to consult a doctor about the condition of his right leg which was causing him some anxiety, and he may have taken with him only the papers he needed for his business transactions. However, when he reached Aden his leg proved to be in a serious condition and the doctor advised his immediate return to France for treatment. He never went back to Abyssinia, for he died at Marseilles the following November.

If these documents alleged to have been discovered are articles which Rimbaud wrote concerning his many expeditions and adventures in Abyssinia they are precious, even if they are not literary, for he was the first European to live at Harar, the first European to penetrate to some of the more outlying parts of Ethiopia.

For centuries Harar had been a mysterious city, impenetrable behind its mud-grey walls, from which no stranger had ever returned alive. Until the coming of the Egyptians only one European, Burton, had managed, in 1854, to force his way in and he succeeded only because he disguised himself as a Moslem. He only stayed ten days.

Twenty years later, however, things had changed.

In 1874, when Raouf Pacha conquered the province of Harar, he placed a garrison in the capital and made a trade route to the coast. During the ten years of the Egyptian occupation there was always at Harar a large force which was supplied chiefly from the European stores at Aden.

In 1880 a Frenchman called Bardey conceived the plan of opening a trading station in Harar itself, instead of doing his business with the local pedlars at quayside at the port of Zeyla. He went up to Harar, opened a branch of his business there, and left one of his employees, Rimbaud, in charge. This was the first European trading station to be opened in the interior of Africa.

While at Harar Rimbaud went on many dangerous expeditions in search of ivory and hides, to Bubassa fifty miles south of Harar and far into the province of Ogaden, where no white man had ever been before him. By severe repressive measures the Egyptian authorities managed to keep open the route to the coast, but whenever a party went off the beaten track they were liable to be massacred by the savage tribes. On his return to Harar from this dangerous journey, Rimbaud wrote a full account of the expedition. The report has interest even to-day for the country has altered very little during the half-century. The African explorer Paulitschke, who travelled in the same region in 1885, declared that Rimbaud's report was an invaluable document for any explorer of that country. The eighties were important years for African exploration. It is then we have the travels of Paulitschke, Borelli, Robecchi-Bricchetti and many others, but Rimbaud was the first in the field, though he is now forgotten in this respect. His report did not remain unnoticed, however, and it brought him a certain measure of fame in his own day; it would have brought him more had he known how to exploit his advantages.

The fall of Egypt in 1884 put an end to the trading stations at Harar, and Rimbaud returned to his menial position in the firm at Aden.

After the defeat of Egypt there arose the question of the disposal of the positions which she had occupied all along the Red Sea and which she was now evacuating. Then

began what the Foreign Office records call " Claims to Sovereignty on the Red Sea " which ended in the various European protectorates. This led to the traffic in arms with the interior, not merely the trifling sale of odd firearms to the Somali tribes on the coast, but the traffic of arms on a large scale with the important princes of the interior, resulting in the armaments race between John, Emperor of Abyssinia, and his vassal, Menelek, King of Shoa. This question is interwoven with that of the struggle for supremacy on the coast. Its account will be found elsewhere.[1] All European traders in Abyssinia dealt in arms—indeed most travellers also. The various nationalities supplied—according to their political taste—either the Emperor or Menelek. This led to further complications and rivalries on the coast. The English supported the Emperor, while the French and Italians favoured Menelek.

Rimbaud, seeing no immediate prospect of escaping from his menial position at Aden, determined to risk all the money he had saved on one big venture of supplying arms to Menelek, hoping thereby to gain an odd thousand pounds. But he was not a shrewd business man and he did not realize—for he had not yet done business with him—that Menelek was no longer a simple negro like those with whom he came into contact on the coast, but well accustomed to dealing with Europeans, aware of all their deceits—indeed practising a few of his own, and frequently getting the better of the bargain.

Rimbaud had hitherto lived in the comparatively civilized city of Harar, but now he was venturing into the primitive and barbarous kingdom of Shoa. The journey from Tajoura to the interior was, according to all travellers, one of the most terrible in the world. After five months of almost unendurable hardships he arrived at Ankober,

[1] Starkie: *Rimbaud in Abyssinia* and *Rimbaud en Abyssinie* (with further documents).

but Menelek was absent on an expedition to conquer Harar before the Italians took possession of it. After a battle lasting little more than a quarter of an hour he routed the Hararis at Tchalanko and entered the city in triumph. He left his nephew, Ras Makonnen—the father of Haile Sellassie—as governor and proceeded to Entoto. Thither Rimbaud went to meet him.

After four months of haggling, discussion, claims and counter-claims a sum, which barely covered Rimbaud's expenses, was agreed upon and he was given a draft to be paid by Ras Makonnen from the Harari treasury, for Menelek had no ready money and the Hararis, being good business men, had always plenty of silver. Rimbaud has given a bitterly ironic and humorous account of his transactions with Menelek and the inhabitants of Ankober and Entoto in a letter addressed to the French consul at Aden. It shows that the satirist who, as a boy, had written *Les Assis*, was not dead.

After obtaining his draft Rimbaud proceeded to Harar along the new route which Menelek's victory over the Hararis made possible. It is an epoch making journey as he was the first European to take advantage of this road. Henceforth the route to the capital of Shoa from the Red Sea will be that from Zeyla—later from Jibuti—through Harar and thence to Entoto. One of the chief advantages was that the journey could be taken by easy stages, through friendly country with less expenses of armed escort since it avoided entirely the territory of the Danakil, the tribe most to be feared. And, moreover, the journey took now thirty-five days instead of the sixty by the earlier route from Tajoura.

After Rimbaud had finished his business at Harar he pushed on to the coast. He did not come to the usual port, the English port of Zeyla, but to Jibuti, and he recognized the excellence of this place as the starting point for caravans

to the interior—better than Zeyla. It had a good natural harbour and abundance of fresh water.

On his return to Aden, Rimbaud published in the *Bosphore Egyptien* an account of his important expedition to Abyssinia and this report was favourably noticed in many important European reviews, in Germany, France, England, and Italy. In spite of its financial disaster to its organizer the expedition had not been a failure as a whole. It led to important results in connection with the influence of France on the Red Sea and her penetration of Abyssinia. Rimbaud was able, from personal experience to prove how wasteful in time, hardship, and money was the earlier route to Shoa, and to point out the advantages of the new route from Jibuti through Harar to Entoto. This route eventually became the regular road to Abyssinia when the railway was laid down to follow it.

Rimbaud's report had a further interest in that it is a valuable contribution to the history of Abyssinia at a significant moment of its development. It is the account by a clear-sighted observer of Menelek's rise to power, of his warlike ambitions, his shady policy, his relations with his emperor, and finally his attitude to the various European Powers who were struggling for supremacy on the Red Sea. Rimbaud understood clearly—as the Italians did not —what part Menelek would ultimately play during the war between Italy and the Emperor, which had broken out in January, 1887. Italy hoped to be able to use for her own ends the well known rivalry between Menelek and his overlord. Rimbaud was one of the few people who understood what game Menelek was playing between the emperor on the one hand and his so-called allies on the other. He would never allow himself to be influenced by any European power, he was suspicious of them all and he would ultimately use them for his own ends. But he was not averse to allowing them to think that they could count on

his help and to accepting, in return, arms and ammunition —arms which he eventually used against them at Adowa.

At Aden Rimbaud wrote articles dealing with his trip to Shoa and with the general political and international situation, articles intended for *Le Temps*, *Le Figaro*, and *Le Courrier des Ardennes*. Few could have been better qualified than he to treat these topics. He had lived for seven years in these parts, he knew the local languages and dialects and he had been in close touch with the Abyssinian chiefs. But the French papers commissioned correspondents with no knowledge of local politics or conditions to write the reports. The articles which Rimbaud wrote at this time are probably those which are said to have been discovered at Dire Dawa.

Disappointed in his hopes of journalism, Rimbaud went back to Harar to direct a trading station and, on his own account, he carried on gunrunning and was probably implicated in the slave trade. He was at Harar when Menelek, on the death of John at the hands of the Dervishes, made himself Emperor of the whole of Abyssinia. Then he sent his nephew, Ras Makonnen, to Rome to sign a treaty with Italy, a treaty which he was later so astutely to repudiate. Rimbaud wrote of these events in a letter addressed to the French explorer Borelli, which shows how valuable a reporter the papers lost when they failed to appoint him.

Rimbaud spent the last years of his life at Harar and he became a close friend of Ras Makonnen, who was genuinely grieved at his death. We do not know what he did during the long hours he spent alone in his hut. Bardey, in an unpublished letter of 1897 addressed to Paterne Berrichon, said that he was constantly writing, and suggests that he was preparing to return to a literary career as soon as he had made sufficient money to retire from business. Amongst the papers which he carried back to France with him is a

letter which has nothing to do with his business, a letter from the editor of an advanced literary review, *La France Moderne*, in which he is addressed as " le chef de l'École Décadente et Symboliste " and invited to contribute to the paper. Perhaps, in this trunk at Dire Dawa, which has turned up so strangely after half a century, we shall find the results of his solitary meditation or composition. Perhaps we shall discover further *Illuminations*, the *Illuminations* of a mature man. In a letter which Father Jarosseau, Bishop of Harar, wrote to me he suggested that Rimbaud's preoccupations during his last years had been spiritual and philosophic; maybe we shall find amongst the papers a new *Chasse Spirituelle* to replace the one which Verlaine was instrumental in losing and which he declared was Rimbaud's greatest poem.

It is to be hoped, at all events, that, whatever the nature of the documents discovered, when the time comes to release them they will be entrusted to a scholar not only acquainted with the work of Rimbaud, but one who understands as well the historical and political background in Abyssinia and on the Red Sea during the years from 1880 to 1891.

POETRY

EIGHTH ELEGY

THERE WAS A woman in Asia—whether she merited
death, the birds knew, and the mottled weeds:

but so they bound her hands to the dead hands
the dead and the living into the bound grave

and so against her milkless breasts she felt
the idle sinews harden to a cross:

so his green belly pressed the open rose
of her thighs, and his slack jaw came and went at her lips

through days and nights in darkness. Those who listened
could hear the breathing underneath the stone.

Look down to-day and see your bedfellow.

Sometimes by night utter mortality
is closer than we know, and speaks to us.

Into the final silence which the jocular
years contrive for those whose life is speech . . .

The flames look down and count the candle's length
bound to the pale wax, golden as a soul—

And there were two who lay beside a river
among the flowing miles of the brown seeds

but the trees laughed at them, and gold-eyed birds
thrust their hard beaks through every hanging leaf—

papery heads that the long grass like flames
will pierce, or rivers carry into the lightless sea:

And there were two, watchers beside a fire
crouching in darkness under the hills of wind

who turned and lost each other in the night
and wandered calling, but the hills were empty.

The candle's flesh is white, the flesh of a girl
melting into time, weeping white coins. Below

the stone, those who were listening, for nine days
heard crying. Every day they came again

until grass hid the edges of the grave.
Look down to-day and see your bedfellow.

ALEX COMFORT

LYRIC

Oh keep your sweetness clover;
Days will come
When men no longer wish to feast on blood.
White May, Spring's bridal daughter,
It would be shame
To lose you from the battle-shattered wood.

And lilac, loveliest as I walk
At evening time
Along the road that brings me to my home.
I know if you could talk
Your words would be fit fellows for the strain
Of virginals, and Time

Would stay his shuffling feet,
Thin hand to ear,
And listen to your poems in the hedge.
And did I forget you, sweet
Poppies, as you rear
Those gallant scarlet heads, as red as rage?

I ask forgiveness then, whose heart is small
To house all beauties that delight my soul.

HENRY TREECE

ENDIMIOU

THERE ARE AS many stars
beneath my head,
(each a particular red)
as over me await
the rising moon.

In this dark globe
for which I have no word
unless it be your eyes—
I see man's fall and rise
and fall revolve
continuously
about its orb;

behold, as the migrations cross the page,
each conqueror a cloud,
each seer, dawn—
the true, intuitive plan
mistranslated, misinterpreted
from age to age.

BRYHER

THE WATER MUSIC

By GLYN JONES

SHALL I DIVE, shall I dive? Behind me the patterns of the coloured town I left lie spread out in the green valley like a carpet taken out on the grass for beating, and I race down the sunny slope out of sight of it. I am a flier with the wind rushing under the bony arches of my wings, I am a white gull, I am two-hundred gulls, I am the gull-shower of snow in sunshine, and the whirled flakes of summer whitening the world. I turn my beaked face and out of a bright eye I see beside my head, rigid and purposeful, my crooked wing with its piled-up foam-crest of feathers broken wave-white along its ridge in the speed-created wind, I see the few cricketing children dwarfed in the tree-surrounded meadow, and the grannie in black who minds their picnic fire, and the column of wood-smoke upright in the odorous air of the field. Beyond the curtain of foliage surrounding the oval meadow glitters the curve of the river in silver patches, poured like a flat snake among the trees, sundering the rooted feet that crowd upon its bank. And beside the river's biggest pool rises the grey diving-rock, the stone in the sunshine pale as coltsfoot leaf but smouldering warm to the fingers. Shall I dive, shall I dive?

As I stood by the little sherbet shop at the cornfield gate and looked over the wheat, a large broken-hearted bird came crying inland on long transparent wings like knives, radiant as fine sailcloth or sunlit snow. He was a beautiful gull, and after circling he came to rest on one leg like a wineglass upon the gatepost beside me. He had a lovely white neck, and the sun-kindled curve of his swelling breast gleamed white as the milky dazzle of coconut-kernel in the sunshine which he faced. Over his powerful boxer's back was spread a mantle of smooth

dove-grey feathers, and below the glitter of his theatrically darkened eye-disc he had a brilliant broom-yellow bill, long, curved and tigerish, with a blob of blood-orange red painted near the nostrils.

" Gull," I said in bad Latin, " why have you left your green egg ? " " Wha, wha, wha," was his reply, as he folded up his webs and flew off rapidly up the valley ahead of us. Shall I dive ?

Now I am across the scented meadow and through the partition of trees, I climb the high grey diving-rock and see the bathers undressing on the cliff-shelves opposite or already swimming in pure water. I greet twenty boys from my crocketted pinnacle, waving towel and black triangular slip, hailing red-tied Thomas as comrade, a ginger boy with freckles and the blue eyes of a black kitten as neighbour Williams, and having to cry " Gracias," to the pale and orphaned Scabbo Ball, who, wishing me well, addresses me with a bow as senor. The water beneath is limpid, the pebbles and the sandy bottom waver under it, smoothly it flows over them like flawed glass. Shall I dive with the speed of the gull or like the capering swallow who plunges with shut wings ?

Below me among the rocks is the perfectly fitting pool, large and circular, with the sun shattered upon its surface ; there is the voluminous river cataracting down the grey limestone steps in crystal fans and ferns and luminous ice-sheets and floods of clear rock-varnish, and bunches of glass bananas ; there is the dim tunnel that receives the sliding river in a long sealskin volute out of the dazzling floor of the pool, the down-drench of birch-boughs and the green masses of beech-leaves sleek under the smooth glove of the sunshine are arched over the glossy water. The broad scarlet towel-stripe glows unbearable as ruby on the grey rock, the black-slipped boys in naked groups lounge white and delicate in midday moon-flesh, and warm, on

the sunlit shelves of the little cliff. Rosie Bowen the boot-maker's boy, begotten of mild mother and the boxing-glove burning sire, ignoramus, *victor ludorum*, stands in the water severed at the knees, with half-revealed distaste upon a dunce's countenance of endearing and transcendental ugliness. As he ponders somebody throws a pebble into the water, and his back is splashed.

" Ay, Scabbo," he shouts without looking round. " I'll dig you in the chin."

And then he slowly advances over the velvet-growing stones like a thief among snares or a sufferer from foot-warts ; with the pool-water chilling his bandy legs he is hesitant as Dic Dywyll, reluctant and maladroit now, no reckless Christmas morning plunger to be met with an ice-hammer in his pocket on the track to the frozen tarn. He toes the slippery pool-stones in his path, each bearded with a long phlegm of green weed, into water as clear as crystal he peers with the intensity of a louse-hunting mother examining the hair of her youngest. By spreading to the sun his boxer's ape-arms, powerful and muscular under their gleaming ginger fell, he achieves for a moment the unstable balance of the tight-rope artiste. He is an indifferent concealer of his dislike of this element in its icy mountain freshness, unwarmed by equatorial current or outpoured boiler-water from the pithead engine-room, but gradually he sinks into the depths of the pool, the blackish Caspian birthmark on his leg is submerged, the rings spread from his hairy thighs, and finding with his soles a rock-slab in the river bed when the water is around his waist, he crosses his arms in respite on his chest, and tucks into his armpits his yellow iron-mold hands—because he would smoke tea-leaves, or sea-weed, or even indiarubber. His abnormal homeliness in the pool is as rare as great villainy or genius. Upon his giant head is sewn a dense fibrous hump of coconut hair ; his cheeks

even now are tomato-red, and his protrusive lower jaw-bone with the liquorice stumps of disordered black teeth, gapes open like a half-shut bottom drawer. Were I to dive and come up beside him, before punching he would stare with the incredulity of Geralt's soldier voiding a calf. Dare I dive into this huge water?

Under a tree with the curving tail of a branch hanging down over the water stands Arthur Vaughan Morgan, Rosie's friend, tall and lovely limbed, forgetting now the humiliation of battered tea-spoons and the charred cork for a nob in the broken teapot lid; he leans garlanded and naked in a dance-dress of sunlight flimsily patterned with transparent foliage. And Evan Williams, the third of The Three, his hair corrugated like biscuit paper, surreptitiously unrobes behind a jut of rock, concealing thus the unique and resourceful fastenings of his broken underwear. He removes last a sort of check bodice with a frilled waistline. He has orange-golden hair and orange-golden freckles you couldn't put a pin between. He does not wear the black school bathing triangle but a scalene slip of his own devising fashioned from a pair of bootlaces and a folded red handkerchief with white polka dots. That Sterne-visaged grammarian, our English master, who annihilates me with sarcasm when I audibly praise heaven for prose-writers who use two words where one will do, yet reads aloud with approval to the assembled form my essay upon the virtues of our native land. "Glory be to the Isle of the Mighty for her ponds and the pools of all her rivers," he sneers, "for Pwll Wat, and Pwll Taf and Pwll Tydfil. And for her lakes, for Llangors and Llyn y Fan, and for Llyn Syfaddon lovely under Dafydd's swan."

"Let there be praise also for the pools of the Po and for the waters of Lake Titicaca," Evan whispers behind my blushing ear.

"Praise her for her towns and villages and her ancient

divisions, praise her for Gwynedd and Powys and Dyfed and Morgannwg. Praise her for her lovely names, for Llanrhidian, Afon Sawdde, Fan Girhirych, Dyffryn Clwyd. Praise her for Rhosllanerchrugog——"

"And for Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwll-llandysiliogogogoch," softly intones Williams to a mutilated version of "Hen Wlad fy Nhadau."

"Let us praise her for Lleyn and Llanelly, for Dinas Mawddwy and Dinas Powis, for Cwm Elan and Cwm Rhondda, let us praise Tresaith equally with Treorky and Penrhyn Gŵyr equally with Pengarnddu."

"Let us praise Moscow equally with Little Moscow," growls Evan, "and Llantwit Major equally with Asia Minor," and the only thing to do is to cough.

Now Bolo Jones the overman's boy, togaed in many towels, wishing to show Arthur little Dai Badger denounced as Cataline and indignantly interrogated as to when he shall cease oppressing the people, shouts down, "Acker, Acker, look at this."

Arthur, dappled under his hanging bough, ignores him.

"Acker Morgan," shouts undaunted Bolo again from his proscenium, a grey ledge of rock six feet above the water, his arm outstretched in indignation towards the singing Cataline.

Arthur frowns, examining his nails. He is a cock with a high comb. His three sisters are knowing and fashionable, they have haughty expressions but short legs.

"Ack—er," shouts Bolo once more, loud above the cries and the chorus-singing and the low roar of the river rushing into the pool with the splash of water washing itself all over.

Arthur turns towards him. "My name is Arthur," he says testily. "Arthur—heroic and European. Arthur Trevelyan Vaughan Morgan."

Bolo Jones drops his towels, claps his hands to his head and collapses backwards into the pool.

And dare I dive from this height into the water?

Rosie Bowen is swimming. He has waded up to the foot of the cataract and now, using a breast-stroke, proceeds kicking with the help of the current down the middle of the water. His swimming is laborious and convulsive, like a frog who has swallowed a handful of lead-shot, but everyone remembers Imperato's and his head is not pushed under. On the lowest ledge of the cliff opposite, Phil and Sinky swing a grinning Dai Badger to and fro by the wrists and ankles, while Scabbo, his body white as pipeclay, gives them his orders. "Away with him," he cries, "cast the perjured caitiff into the roaring torrent of the river." "The traitor says he cannot swim, my lord," says Sinky. "Clearly," answers Scabbo, "here is a fine chance for him to learn." Dai bounds outwards, he enters the water in the button of a ragged bloom of spray. Bleddyn Beavan, who has just climbed out to watch, bends smiling in a sleek skin with his toes gripping the rock brink, his hands on his knees and a thread of water running back into the pool off his chin. All of us in our form have a firm and scientifically accurate knowledge of our physical genesis because his father is Doctor Gomer and Bleddyn will lend you his medical books at tuppence a week. Shall I dive?

When I was small and dirty, with a quilted bottom to my trousers, I wanted only to learn swimming. Out of my big brother's book I spelled this sentence: "The action of the frog should be studied and imitated." On washing day I mitched and went up Cwm Ffrwd, croaking about by the river like a frog. At last I found a big green one weighing a quarter of a pound. I put him in my cap to bring him home and he didn't like that because my cat used to sleep in it every night. My mother had two tubs of clothes-water in our back and I put him in the one for the flannels.

I made him swim about in the warm water among the shirts and the nightgowns, and soon I could swim lovely. When I heard my mother coming I put him down the lavatory and poured a bucket of water on top of him.

That evening I went up the pit-pond on the tips where the collier-boys used to swim dirty. I climbed on to the timber baulks and dived in. When I woke up a big crowd of men was carrying me home across the fields on a stretcher. I thought I had been punished for drowning the frog who had taught me to swim. At home the doctor said " And last week he pulled the coping of the Methodist Chapel wall on his chest."

The same summer my mother took us to the Wells for our holidays. I borrowed tuppence off my brother and went for a swim in the open-air baths. I had never been to a baths before. The water was black and crowded with people. I dived in at the shallow end. This time when I came to I was stretched out on the mohair couch in our lodgings with my skin cold as glass and a big smooth lump like a tea-cup on the front of my head.

And now dare I dive?

Behind me across the meadow, I see through the trees the luminous green slope where I was a rugger-running gull, tilted to the sunglare, the grass seething in the summer sunbeams vivid and crystalline, the brightness glowing over the kindled surface with a teeming lustre of intense emerald as though the grassy fabric were a sheet of transparent crystal evenly illuminated with rays of pure greenish fire from beneath. And over it goes my gull, rigid and ravenous, crying " Wah, wah, wah." He is beautiful enough to be addressed by the wandering scholar who said, " Lovely gull, snow-white and moon-white, immaculate sun-patch and sea-glove, swift-proud fish-eater, let us fly off hand in hand, you are light on the waves as a sea-lily. My grey nun among sea-crests, you shall be my glossy letter, go

and carry a *billet* to my girl for me and win distant praise by making for her fortress. You shall see her, Eigr-coloured, on her castle, gull. Carry her my note, my chosen, go girl-wards. If she is alone do not be shy of talking to her, but be tactful in the presence of so much fastidiousness. Tell her I shall die without her, and look, gull, tell her I am over head and ears in love with her, that not even Merddin or Taliesin desired her superior in beauty. Gull, under her tangled crop of copper you shall behold Christendom's loveliest lovely—but she'll be the death of me if you bring no for an answer."

"Take my boots off when I die, when I die," sings Dai Badger, shaped like a ship's anchor floating on the surface of the pool.

"Take my boots off when I die."

The butcher's cart and bill-heads of Dai's father bear the slogan, "Let Badger be your Butcher," which seven-syllabled line in the opinion of that erratic but pithy critic Evan Williams, contains more poetry and *cynghanedd* than the similarly hortatory but more famous words of the High Priest of Lakery urging us to take Nature for our Teacher. For Evan, who always hears of such things, has solved the riddle of Hamlet. The clue lies, he maintains, with the hidden character called Pat, addressed directly only once and that in the tortured reflection of young Denmark—"Now might I do it, Pat, now he is praying"; but whose machinations and subtle influence have confounded three hundred years of criticism. Shall I dive now like a glider of the boughs?

Dai Badger is again on the shelf, juicy-nosed, counting his tail-feathers after his ducking and the bravado of his song. He spots me watching him across the pool and wants to know if I will come over the mountain with him tomorrow. "To where?" I ask cautiously. "One A one b one e one r one d one a one r one e," he cries at breathless

speed, "Will you?" He is a fabulist and claims to be in love with the vicar's Swiss maid there, who is indeed a nicely shaped young woman but twice his size. I make an excuse and he sings a wicked ballad describing his passion for her foreign body. He feels no pudeur at our natural out-curves and tuberosities and his naked belly now is tight as a bagpipe with lyricism. But Rosie Bowen hearing him spits into the water; he has coconut hair, an undershot jaw, and, to a god's-eye view, a hump like a high bosom on his back; he spits copiously and without displaying muscular action, projecting a large and heavy gob downstream without a twitch of his face, sending it flying in a sweet curve from his immobile face.

And now shall I dive?

Arthur leaves the shelter of his tail-shaped tree and stands among the swimmers on the soaking ledge like a patrician candidate heroically facing the malodorous citizens. Flicker, our mathematics master, who declares so and so to be an outstanding this and that if he would only more frequently "duck his nut," is despised by Arthur, the inelegant phrasing, bad breath and linoleum waistcoat of this unpleasant sciolist deeply offend him. "Here is a clever chap," sneers Flicker distributing the marked examination papers after his terminal test, "Arthur Morgan, the famous mathematical genius. He can solve a quadratic equation in one line! Stand up Morgan! You cooked the answer!"

"I didn't," says Arthur with dignity.

"You did," shouts Flicker, reddening and bulge-eyed.

"I didn't," says Arthur.

"You did," shouts Flicker.

"Oh, all right," says Arthur sitting down. "I'll give you the benefit of the doubt."

But he is teased because Bolo Jones has his photograph taken in his first long-trousered sailor-suit, with a cane whistle on a cord and a fouled anchor worked on his front.

Below me where the water is quiet, foam in clusters of papus and cuckoo-spit and fine meshes of foam thin as beer-froth float on the dark water; under the overhanging boughs of the boy-bodied beeches and the cataracting birches, a broken mesh of reflected gold is thrown up in the gloom, the network of uneasy golden light on the under-branches is torn apart and joined up again as the green liquid glass of the water is splashed and the sunlight scattered. A breeze starts, the wind is handed on from tree to tree, I hear near me the first soft clatter of the poplar leaves. Soon the swimming will be over and I dawdle and have not dived. Rosie retires shivering in the hot sunshine, cold beyond the reach of wine or smith's fire. Evan says a swig would be welcome as hail in hell and Dai Badger shouts, "I feel poppish too." They dress and leave together for the widow's shop at the cornfield gate where on a piece of torn cardboard, for the information of picnickers, is chalked the message—"Hot water sold here. Pop round the corner." I must dive.

Shooting down the silky chasm of my plunge, with my soles to the brilliant county blue and the cortex of that highly convolved and dazzling cloud, I shall be the gull off her olive egg, the diving gull from the dovey down, the herring-gull or blackback falling like large snow off the roof of the world. Rosie is a powerful land-animal, Evan charming and unawakened, Arthur learned in Latin, beautiful as Sande or some musk-scented princess; but I am the finest swimmer in this water and the only person who knows what a vidame is. My lungs are full, with hirundine screamings I hurdle hedges, I plunge performing the devil-dive of a star. I bomb the water blind and all images are shattered in my head. I sink and soon it is silent there, the dark beards of the stones wave as though in the breeze and the small grains of sand bowl in the current along the bottom of the pool. My breath rises like

anchor-bubbles through the water green as glass edges, I lie like sand-eel, water-snake, or Welsh Shelley under the ten-foot slab of transparent green watching it reach the world of my God whom I continue to praise, whom I praise for the waters, the little balls of dew and the great wave shooting out its tassel; I praise him for the big boy-bodied beeches and all trees velvet in sunshine and shying like mad when the grass is flat under the wind; I praise him for the blooms of the horned lilac, for the blossomed hawthorn with the thick milks of spring rising over her and the blood-drop of the ladycow bled on the white lily. I praise him for the curving gull, the brown coat of the sparrow and the plover with wings like blown hair.

I praise him for words and sentences, I praise him for Flicker Wilkins and for Arthur Vaughan Morgan and his sisters in fashionable hats like low buckets; I praise him for Bolo Jones and Dai Badger and Scabbo Ball, and for Scabbo Ball's auntie who keeps the weighing machine and has green glasses and one hand. I praise him for the golden freckles of Evan Williams as much as for Rosie Bowen who suffers a traumatic malformation of the lower jaw.

I praise him for the things for which I have not praised him and for the things praised only in the pleats of my meaning.

I praise him for his endless fertility and inventiveness, that he stripes, shades, patches and stipples every surface of his creation in his inexhaustable designing, leaves no stretch of water unmarked, no sand or snow-plain without the relief of interfering stripe, shadow, or cross-hatch, no spread of pure sky but he deepens it from the pallor of its edges to its vivid zenith. I praise him that he is never baulked, never sterile, never repetitious.

There is praise for him in my heart and in my flesh pulled over my heart, there is praise for him in my pain and in my enjoying. I show my praise for him in the un-

necessary skip of my walk, in my excessive and delighted staring, in the exuberance of my over-praise.

And when I dive I shall feel the ice of speed and praise him, the shock and tingle of the gold-laced pool and praise him, the chrism of golden sunshine poured on my drenching head again and praise him.

I dive into the engulfing water praising him.

A GIRL'S POEM

I AND MY soldier lay
In our secret place on the hill.
Only we two knew the way
Up brackened bank to the chalky sill.
His forage cap fell on the thyme,
The sweet smell mixed with his hair.
And I sang him a nursery rhyme
As we lay so closely there.

Now nothing lingers
But my hot cheeks;
And the white mud
Over my fingers
Only speaks.

DENTON WELCH

END OF THE HOLIDAYS

By CON MORGAN

TO-MORROW SHE WOULD leave Tynycoed and walk to Aberhonddu, with Auntie Minna and Garland. It was two miles to walk; that meant leaving after lunch, having tea in town, and then getting on the bus at the Walpole.

In two hours she would be home, back in grubby old Williamstown, where the usual Saturday night crowd would be queuing up for the second house at the Palace, and the fish and chip shops doing a roaring trade, even in a heat wave.

She leaned a little further out of the window, and looked down into the front garden.

In one corner grew the moss rose bush, of which her aunt was so fond. She didn't think much of it herself; the roses were small and insignificant, almost hidden by the fuzzy green sepals; the stems closely covered with hair-like spines. She much preferred the pink rose that grew on the bank near the water spout.

The doorstep had just been scrubbed, and was drying quickly in the hot sunshine, but at the side, under the step, there was still a little pool where the soapy water had trickled down.

Below, in the living-room, she could hear her aunt moving about; going down the step into the back kitchen; pouring water into the zinc pan with two handles—like a little bath—in which they washed.

She sighed; to-morrow she would be on her way home. She wondered what her aunt and Garland would do after she had gone. They wouldn't go to the pictures; no, it was too hot. Most probably they would stroll through town, do a few bits of shopping, then walk home again.

Sunday would be an awful day. Everything at home looking and feeling strange, herself a stranger, homesick

for Tynycoed. School started again on Tuesday—and the French essay not yet written—oh dear !

Saturday was Garland's half day. The office closed at one o'clock, and she always came racing home on her motor bike, so that they could get lunch over quickly and go off somewhere.

Last Saturday, they had walked along the Roman road, just the two of them. Auntie Minna hadn't felt like coming. She said it was too far to walk to the " Stone ", in this heat. Garland had looked sulky at first, but she hadn't really minded, in fact, she was laughing before they reached the end of the lane, and had raced her to the first stile.

She thought perhaps Garland wasn't so keen on Auntie Minna coming walking with them. Auntie Minna did drag a little. Of course, she was getting on. She must be about thirty-five, and Garland—heavens ! Garland must be thirty-two or thirty-three !

Somehow, one never thought of her as being old. Garland diving off the top plank into the river, roaring along the road on her bike. Garland in shorts, very brown and tall. Still, she, herself, would be seventeen in November, but, over thirty—middle-aged—how awful !

She jumped down off the window sill, and walked to the dressing table. The pin cushion that Gran had made the week before she died, was wedged under the mirror, to keep it in position. She picked up a comb and changed the parting in her hair, from the centre, to the left side.

The staircase at Tynycoed was narrow and creaky, and wound its way up out of the living-room. Across the opening hung a cretonne curtain. The brass rings jingled together, as she drew the curtain aside and stepped into the room.

Her aunt, looking small and rather tired, was putting cups and saucers on a corner of the table, ready for tea. She wore an arty-crafty peasant frock, with three rows of

coloured binding at the bottom. Her gingery curls were tied with a piece of blue ribbon. She looked up, and said plaintively, in her " little girl's voice ", " Iris dear, you are not going out *now*, it's nearly tea time." She said, " Yes, I'm going down to the Lodge. Mrs. Willis always asks me to stay to tea. I can have tea with the boys." " But didn't you promise Garland you would go with her to see old Miss Mathias? All the puppies have their eyes open, now." " I won't stay long—just see if the boys are taking the boat out."

She stepped out of the living-room into the sunshine. The day was cooling off a little. In the narrow strip of garden, the bees blundered about among the snapdragons, making them open and shut their jaws. She wondered whether they were yawning, or was it an ineffectual attempt to catch their thieving visitors.

At the back of the house, beyond the meadow, was the beginning of the wood. There it was, dark and mysterious even in the day time; the hunting ground of badgers and foxes, the home of the nightmare owl, which called " Goody-hoo ", with such a horrible half-human voice.

She ran across the cobbled yard, down the lane, through the big gate, and on to Penllegaer land.

After tea, she helped Mrs. Willis to wash up. Frank and Smithy kept calling to her from the boat-house, " Come on Iris, come *on*, we won't wait any longer for you." She knew they would, Frank would anyway. He was a dear; a part of all the summer days she had spent at Tyny-coed.

It was hushed, and poignantly lovely, on the lake. The trees near the edge were reflected in the still water; patches of water-lilies were islands of pale blossom. A little moor-hen scuttled out from a clump of bulrushes, bobbed and dived. Every now and again, a fish would leap, and fall back with a splash. She trailed her hand

through the cool water, idly grabbing a handful of weeds as they drifted past.

Frank rowed. His lanky young body swung rhythmically; the oars dipped and feathered the water with beautiful precision. He sat facing them, his face flushed and freckled; his hair flopping over into his eyes.

She sat with Smith's arm around her waist, her head on his shoulder. He was thin and wiry, only a little taller than she was; he wasn't even good looking, but—

She didn't really care so very much for him; he didn't belong here, and would go as soon as his leg was quite fit, and he was allowed to ride again. She thought he must often get very bored up at the House, just looking after the horses.

Garland didn't think much of him. She called him a small part jockey, who had most probably been " warned off ", whatever that was. But it was rather thrilling to have a real MAN—Of course, Frank often tried to kiss her. Last night, as they stood by the gate, he had made a grab at her, but, somehow, the kiss had missed its mark, and in the scuffle, he had jabbed her in the eye with his nose.

Smithy turned her head, gently, towards him; he stroked her hair, and rested his hand on the nape of her neck. Dimly, she thought of palm trees and South Sea islands, of Bing Crosby singing to a guitar. Very slowly, he kissed her on the mouth. Although she did not know it, it was technically perfect.

Frank stopped rowing and shipped the oars. He grinned in an embarrassed way and made clicking noises with his tongue. Suddenly he started rocking the boat from side to side, in a silly loutish way. Smithy said, " Don't be a tedious ass, you'll have us all in the water." Frank splashed water across at him.

While they were fooling about, she looked up. Garland had come down the path, and was standing with her back

against a tree, watching them. Smithy looked up too. He said softly, " Why, look who's here ! Miss Janet Garland, come to take the little girl home." Frank waved and started rowing towards the bank.

Garland came to the edge of the water, and called in a loud unfriendly voice, " I think you had better come home, Iris."

Smithy still had his arm around her waist. He started singing in her ear, " With a tow, row, row, row, row, row, to the British Grenadiers." It wasn't terribly funny—although Garland was so tall—but somehow she just couldn't help giggling. They were not near enough for her to hear, but she looked at them, and then walked quickly away.

When she got in, Garland was sitting near the window, reading. The light shone on her sleek, wet-looking, dark hair. There was no sign of her aunt. She said, carelessly, " Hullo, where is Auntie Minna ? " Garland said, without looking up, " She has gone for the milk." There was something tense and rather frightening in the air. She swaggered across the room, humming tunelessly.

Before she reached the stairs, Garland stood up. She looked queer and white under her tan. She said, " Come here, you insolent little slut ! " and caught her by the shoulder. As she jerked away, there was a tearing sound, and the sleeve seam of her old summer frock parted. She turned without a word and ran up the stairs, furious and trembling, the tears rolling down her face.

REVIEWS OF NEW BOOKS

A CURTAIN OF GREEN. EUDORA WELTY. The Bodley Head. 7*s.* 6*d.*

A GARLAND OF STRAW. SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER. Chatto and Windus. 8*s.* 6*d.*

A Curtain of Green brings us from America a new writer of short stories. One will add that they are original, and quite unlike anybody else's short stories. This proclaims their personal stamp. And they have, too, what often Miss Warner's lack, a real *feeling*. When one has read such stories as "A Memory" or "Petrified Man", or what seemed to me to be the best story in the book, "Powerhouse," one is left with the feeling that the lives portrayed in these pages have not ended with the story itself, but have gone on as through some wide door of an even greater experience, that they will go on living their stumbling, groping, and searching days, their lives are but the preludes to dramas and comedies which we are fated not to see in final illumination. These stories have point, without which a story is no longer a story but a mere anecdote. "The Whistle" is a good example of the author's direct method, a story of two old people, who, when warned by the "Whistle" that the freeze was threatening, went out to save their tomato plants even to the extent of covering them with their own clothes. One feels cold whilst reading it, the atmosphere predominates, as also does the Whistle itself, which hangs over their lives like some fated ordination, for we suddenly remember that the woman herself has been cold for years, she feels she will never get warm again, her life is ruled by the "Whistle" against which human fire seems pitifully inadequate. But over the whole range of these stories one is conscious of the *feeling*, without which experience is merely fake, something whipped up by proxy as it were. And also there is absorption in the writing, but disciplined

and never wayward, which is the hall-mark of the artist, for at the same time there is conscious detachment, she is never swamped by her own feelings. She has the clear eye, and, more important still, the patient hand.

A Garland of Straw, on the other hand, is the work of a more practised writer, and the best of the stories in the book is "A Level Crossing". Some of them are hardly stories at all. "Apprentice," a story about German occupation of Poland, is a mere addition to an already weighty subject, about which we are knowledgeable to the extent of satiation. "A Functionary" and "A Red Carnation" are pin-points on German character, but little more. A number of these stories have appeared in the *New Yorker*, a statement which goes on singing itself into the reader's ear for almost the whole length of the book. "My Shirt is in Mexico" is pointless, whereas "An Unimportant Case" is the reverse, we are moved by the story which has a reality that the others lack. And after reading Miss Welty's book one becomes aware of *what* these lack. Miss Welty's are "lit up", Miss Warner's are not. JAMES HANLEY

SUN OVER THE PALMS. PASCHOAL CARLOS MAGNO. Constable. 10*s*.

Sun over the Palms is a novel about a poor Italian family living in a decaying suburb of Rio de Janeiro towards the close of the last world-war. Chico Marianni, the tailor, has four sons and four daughters; Imaculata, the eldest of the children, is nineteen. In addition, his large shabby house accommodates eight apprentices whom Chico cares for as if they were his own flesh and blood. Parents more devoted than Chico and Josefa it is impossible to imagine, or children more responsive; Senhor Magno's story might have been written to show what a well-spring of affection nourishes Italian family life. And also what a love of religion, learning, and the arts. Chico spends more time and strength and money than he can spare on his project of the Children's

Theatre; and Lucio, his favourite son, a boy of twelve with the makings of a poet, handicapped by ill-health and the gibes of his schoolfellows, makes a magnificent struggle to realize his literary ambitions.

It is an intricate story and the author's technique, which is to isolate some salient episode in the life of this or that character, dwell on it for a page or two and then take up another, puts a strain on the reader's attention; also, it distributes the interest too evenly over the book. We do not get much sense of design or climax; the epidemic of Spanish influenza which rings down the curtain is a visitation from without, not a development from within.

But the writing, simple, subtle, sincere, and often very moving, is so good that one can hardly believe it is the work of someone who has had to learn our language; and the texture of the story is most satisfying. Senhor Magno's snapshots give a wonderfully complete and convincing picture of a society touchingly united, patient and resilient under affliction, and almost miraculously free from the faults of a materialist civilization. With him, understanding and sympathy are the same thing; many of his characters are prone to err, but there is hardly one who does not in some way challenge the reader's pity. I should like to say something of his sensitiveness to the romance and colour of the Brazilian scene, his handling of crowds, his gift for seeing his characters at the same time through his eyes and through theirs, his skill in making environment seem a part of consciousness. But it is the intensely human quality of his outlook, mature and devoid of all false cleverness, that augurs so well for his future as a writer.

L. P. HARTLEY

WHERE LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP DWELT. MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES. Macmillan. 12*s.* 6*d.*

THE SECOND VOLUME of Mrs. Belloc Lowndes's reminiscences should win even more readers than the first, for it

contrives to do that most difficult of things for a continuation; it surpasses in interest its predecessor. As in *I Too Have Lived in Arcady*, the author writes of her family life in England and in France, and is at pains to compare and contrast the two ways of living. But *Where Love and Friendship Dwelt*, which begins when she was seventeen, has an added charm, which is due often to the element of surprise.

At twenty, Mrs. Belloc Lowndes took up writing for a profession and, as a visiting journalist for English papers, she enlarged her acquaintance among the leading French writers of the day. It is a tribute to her vitality that a number of her readers will be surprised to find how long ago that day was in many cases. But the surprise goes deeper than that, for Mrs. Belloc Lowndes is not afraid of upsetting preconceived notions about those she mentions; thus, she describes how Verlaine knelt with her to say the Angelus, and recounts her detection of the fakes in the Goncourt collection of antiques. Famous names—Jules Verne, Dumas *fils*, Louise Michel, Paul Déroulède, Zola—crowd her pages, and of them all she has something individual to say. This and the picture she gives, both deliberately and unconsciously, of French life at the close of last century, make us close this volume in eager anticipation of a third from so lively and courageous a mind.

LILIAN AINSWORTH

TRAVEL IN ENGLAND. THOMAS BURKE. Batsford. Illustrated. 10*s.* 6*d.*

SIX CHAPTERS TRACE the history of travel from Saxon times to streamline days. As is appropriate, Georgian journeys and coaching are the most amply annotated, but in all phases the author enlarges his own description by skilful reference to the accounts of others—Will Kemp, Defoe, John Taylor the Water Poet, Cowper, Charlotte Clarke the actress, and foreign travellers. The illustrations are

well-chosen. I should have liked some mention of gipsies and it seems odd not to find John Gilpin's name in the index, but on the whole it may be said that the expectations aroused by the names of author and publisher are not disappointed. Indeed, if anything, the book is a little above the usual standard of the style of bedside scrap-book in which this firm specializes. A. WILLS

THE SPIRIT OF ENGLISH HISTORY. A. L. ROWSE. Cape. *7s. 6d.*

MR. ROWSE COULD not have chosen a better moment to bring out his summary of English history. Such a book was needed, not only by the many among us who closed text-books and schooldays together, but by the Americans who are here for the first time and are anxious to read about this puzzling land. As we might expect from a Cornishman, Mr. Rowse is at his best on the survey of Elizabethan and Tudor England and in the earlier chapters when he discusses the relationship between the Celtic and the Saxon strains. He has chosen the valuable "middle way" and reminds us, we forget it too often, of the large contribution England has made to the civilization of the world during the last century. Even our present discontent is a healthy sign and will help to form a bridge, in the post-war period, between Europe and the United States. Naturally historians will not be in agreement on all points with the author but this is the book I should choose personally if I were asked to take non-specialist classes abroad in English history. There are maps, a brief list of useful dates and suggestions for further reading. BRYHER

THE FORTUNES OF FALSTAFF. J. DOVER WILSON. Cambridge. *6s.*

IN THE CLARK Lectures delivered this year at Cambridge, Professor Dover Wilson announced his discovery, or put forward his theory, that Falstaff is to be regarded as the Vice of medieval morality and miracle-play whose downfall

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was dramatically inevitable ; Prince Hal, by the same token, is the prodigal whose repentance is, dramatically, as necessary. This view is now expanded into a book and suggests further that when Shakespeare " took audiences by storm in 1597 and 1598 with his double *Henry IV* he gave them something much more than a couple of semi-mythical figures from the early fifteenth century, brought up to date politically ". The author enlarges on this and, after 128 pages, the main purpose of which is a reinstating of Prince Hal, concludes that the play " celebrates a double coronation "—in Falstaff, " that of our English Bacchus, who, with a sprig of rue in his garland, reigns for ever from his state at the Boar's Head ", and of Henry, in whose person Shakespeare crowns " *noblesse oblige*, generosity and magnanimity, respect for law and the selfless devotion to duty which comprise the traditional ideals of our public service."

It will be seen that the professor may be held to over-estimate the importance of a " discovery " which most normally intelligent readers of Shakespeare take for granted. Unfortunately, normal intelligence is one of the first things cast overboard by the majority of those who decide to specialize in Shakespearean study. The real interest in this book lies not in its formulation of the instinctively held view of Falstaff, but in the light thrown on the methods of those incorrigible mountain-making moles, the academic Shakespearean scholars. " Until recently," begins Professor Dover Wilson, " I took my critical notions about Falstaff and Prince Hal more or less ready-made from Andrew Bradley." That is worth pondering. Only on his own admission, later did he have the desperate idea of checking those notions with what he found in the pages of Shakespeare himself !

Clearly, if scholars are going to study the poet, instead of themselves on the poet, if the old game of refuting a rival

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HARRAP BOOKS

is over, we are in for a new era of Shakespearian criticism. Meanwhile, let it be hoped that this volume represents the beginning of the end of the old.

TREVOR JAMES

THE GIFT OF TONGUES. MARGARET SCHLAUCH. Allen and Unwin. 12*s.* 6*d.*

LANGUAGE CLASSES HAVE seldom been more popular than they are to-day and some of the new methods of teaching have achieved astonishing results. The more we know, however, about the skeleton of language, the easier it is to struggle with a foreign tongue, and this survey of the subject should be of immense value to many readers. The chapters on Sounds and Alphabets and On the Family Relationships Among Languages are particularly well done. It is debatable whether the author were wise to include the section on modern poetry. She has much feeling for the use of words but the subject is too vast for a few pages and I should have preferred myself, a chapter upon the problems of study. Schools and parents seem to ignore the discoveries already made, that the ability to learn foreign tongues is highest in early infancy and lowest at adolescence. It makes all the difference to a student's progress if he begins when he is six or when he is sixteen.

Professor Schlauch's book is one for the general reader and particularly for the teacher. There are some wise comments upon "undeveloped languages" and their possibilities and we can imagine that the volume could be used to provoke lively discussion.

LAMBERT STONE

BALCONY EMPIRE. REYNOLDS and ELEANOR PACKARD. Chatto and Windus. 15*s.*

ITALY WAS SUNSHINE, holidays, and change to most English visitors and fascism was just a pageant, silly perhaps but

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PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

CORRIGENDA.—The Editor asks authors to accept apologies for recent errors in proof-reading, due to wartime conditions. Particularly is it regretted that in the last issue, on page 57, in Alex Comfort's contribution, "wireless" made nonsense of a sentence that should have had "voiceless" and "flog" turned strangely into "flop".—R. H.

quite harmless. It was possible to make them anxious about Germany but very few would consent to take the Italian situation seriously. I was apprehensive from the beginning and shall never forget the words of a correspondent of a well-known English newspaper, quoted to me by a friend of his, as we watched celebrations of the march on Rome in 1923. "This is the beginning of the next European war." Afterwards, I knew of the miserable refugees who tried to cross the Swiss frontiers. Some reached safety but many died of frostbite and exposure. It was an ugly business and I can say truthfully that in some ways I feared Italy more than I feared Germany—ideas sprang up in the south that the Nazis developed with brutal thoroughness.

Balcony Empire is the story of Italy from 1934 to 1942, by two well-known American newspaper correspondents. It is a record of shameful dealing, persecution, and evil that makes one almost despair of the human race. How many thousands of English lives have been lost because of blind stupidity in the matter of Spain, Abyssinia, and Albania! Strong and immediate action in 1936 might have prevented the world war. Still, because it is so unpleasant there is a tendency to forget what happened and therefore this is a valuable book to read at the present time. We should have preferred more condemnation and less air of expediency, though of course no correspondent who openly showed his feelings would have been tolerated in the country.

The description of life after the declaration of war with the United States is lighter in tone and contains many amusing stories. There are good chapters as well on the general situation and upon the composition of the army, navy, and air force.